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Committee Planning and Monitoring Sub-Committee
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OAG Review of Greater Wellington's Self-Assessment as part of the Audit of the LTCCP 2006-16

1. Purpose

To advise the Sub-Committee of the content of the OAG's (Office of the Auditor-General's) review of our self-assessment questionnaire, to respond to some of the points raised and to highlight residual issues.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

As members of the Sub-Committee are aware, the Local Government Act 2002 requires that LTCCPs are audited and that an audit statement is provided in the proposed LTCCP document itself. This requirement did not apply to the first LTCCPs under the transitional provisions so the 2006/16 LTCCP is the first one being audited. In order to cope with the new provision and the workload imposed, the OAG decided that a component of the audit would be the completion of an external self-assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed by officers and endorsed by the chair of the Sub-Committee.

We have recently received the review of our questionnaire which notes areas of strength and weakness.

4. Comment

4.1 General

The review from Audit provides some useful pointers for us in certain areas. It is however apparent that some of our processes were not sufficiently well explained. A response will be sent clarifying such matters.

The remainder of this section looks at particular comments, by exception.

4.2 Consultation

Key finding: *No significant risk noted.*

Areas of weakness/opportunity. OAG notes a heavy reliance on print media. We are aware that desirably we would make use of other approaches. In a communications review during the development of the LTCCP, as reported to Councillors, we identified that greater use of radio would reach different communities. Budget constraints may limit our ability to do so. OAG ask about the potential to assess the effectiveness of Elements in building recognition. We will respond that we have such information as, for example, illustrated in the July 2005 Communication Strategy research report presented to Councillors at an LTCCP workshop on 14 September 2005. The wider question could be considered again as part of our process to develop a consultation policy that is just getting underway.

4.3 Outcomes

Key finding: *Some unease over the approach used to identify regional community outcomes. Need to focus on measure and monitoring.*

The concerns expressed relating to use of Territorial Authority processes show that we did not adequately convey the nature of our approach whereby the wider regional community was involved both in our 2002 process and again in 2005 through the Wellington Regional Strategy. That extra clarification will be provided to Audit.

OAG has correctly identified the need to focus on the outcome measures and monitoring. That work is well underway, again taking a strongly inclusive and collaborative approach.

4.4 Decision-making

Key finding: *Decision-making is potentially a weak area.*

We are at something of a loss to understand the conclusion as it does not seem to be borne by the text. Clarification is being sought.

4.5 Governance and Purpose

Key finding: *No significant risks.*

A clear area of strength.

4.6 Performance Management Systems and Controls

Key finding: *Performance measures and [outcome] monitoring systems require attention.*

The need to introduce a robust outcomes measuring approach is acknowledged and under action.

The review notes that we are not strong in general resident evaluation feedback. This may be an area for consideration. Many territorial authorities carry out annual surveys of general resident satisfaction with their range of services. Achieving a specified level of satisfaction is one means of quantifying an otherwise hard-to-measure output or outcome. Apart from the surveys noted in the July Communications Strategy report referred to earlier and the specific involvement of users in service reviews acknowledged by Audit, Greater Wellington does not carry out such surveys.

It could be argued that such surveys would not be particularly helpful as most functions of the council impinge directly on only a small proportion of the public (e.g. consent holders) or are delivered via third parties (e.g. public transport services). Where there is a particular identifiable sub-set of the population, e.g. park users, we do carry out regular satisfaction surveys.

The question of the potential value of a more generic survey could be addressed through the development of a consultation policy as mentioned earlier.

5. Conclusion

Overall, we should be well satisfied with the results of the Audit review. Apart from areas of misunderstanding or active development (e.g. outcome measures) there are few areas suggested for attention.

6. Communication

No external communication opportunity.

7. Recommendations

That the Planning and Monitoring Sub-Committee recommend to the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee that it:

1. *Notes that the review undertaken of the Self-Assessment Questionnaire as part of the LTCCP Audit, has overall confirmed the strength of this Council's processes.*
2. *Notes that officers have raised with Audit areas of apparent contradiction or misunderstanding.*

3. *Endorses the preparation of a consultation policy which will be the opportunity to review some specific questions raised by Audit.*

Report prepared by:

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Attachment: Audit Review of Greater Wellington's Self Assessment